Marine Corps Civilian Law Enforcement: A Necessary Evil

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As Marines continue to deploy worldwide to fill critical
requirements of national defense, Civilian Marines consistently
stand ready to sustain operations here at home. In June 2007,
the Marine Corps adopted a plan to begin hiring approximately
1,200 Civilian Police Officers. This expansion of civilian
policing will reduce the operational stress on Marine Corps
Military Police and will enhance security and police services
across the Marine Corps. Correspondingly, it enables Military
Police in the OPFOR to reorganize to better support the war
fighter.

> --Marine Corps Civilian Law Enforcement Program website

In July 2007, Commandant of the Marine Corps James T.

Conway commented on the realities that justified an increase in

the size of the corps.[1] The "strain on military occupational

specialties" that he noted was the result of nearly six years of

war on multiple fronts following the events of September 11,

2001. Since that day, the Marine Corps has seen a drastic

change in its mission, supporting the Global War on Terrorism

while also significantly increasing the security of its

infrastructure at bases and stations. Fully engaged in both of

these efforts with a force of just over 4000 Marines,[2] the

military police (MP) community has struggled to provide the

support demanded by both deployed and garrison units.[3]

To meet these challenges, the Law Enforcement Branch (PSL)

at Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) sought the most effective

means to address the military police personnel shortage. In

2004 HQMC (PSL) evaluated the MP requirements for base security

and Law Enforcement (LE) at all Marine Corps installations.[4] The

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[1] General James T. Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps, *ALMAR 008-07*.

[2] *United States Marine Corps' 2006 Concepts + Programs* (Washington, D.C. 2006) 234 and 239.

[3] Major Jeffery Johnson, "Marine Corps Requirements Oversight Council (MROC) 2007 Implementation Supporting Establishment Security Transformation Program (SESTP) Operational Advisory Group," briefing presented at the Dumfries, VA, 17 July 2007. Cited hereafter as Johnson, MROC.

[4] Johnson, MROC

studies concluded that more personnel assigned to installation Military Police Departments (MPD) were needed to free Military Police Marines for duty with the operating forces. HQMC's response was the implementation of a blended Marine and DoD General Schedule (GS) Police Officer force, which today continues to be met with resistance and skepticism by Marines of all ranks. This blended force is vital to maintaining a fully staffed, experienced, and professional organization whose mission is the security of the Marine Corps' critical infrastructure.[5]

Fully Staffed Departments

Currently, all but the three logistics bases at Albany, Barstow, and Blount Island have MPDs consisting of a complex mix of personnel. In addition to Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) qualified MPs, personnel may come from a variety of staffing sources including temporarily assigned operating force MPs, Fleet Assistance Program (FAP) Marines, activated Reservists, Auxiliary MPs, Security Augmentation Forces (SAF), and civilian employees. Yet, even with this pool of sources to draw from, staffing shortfalls continue to exist. At Camp

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[5] Flatter and Associates, *United States Marine Corps Military Police Manpower – MROC*, http://www.flatterassociates.com/docs/FA%20PP%20Presentation%20 USMC_MP2015.pdf.

Lejeune in 2005 for example, military police personnel were routinely switched between deploying units and the MPD in an effort to provide relief to Marines with multiple deployments. This exchange often created additional MPD shortages for several weeks or months as Marines completed pre-deployment training requirements before their replacement reported for duty.[6]

The events of September 11, 2001 revealed a significant problem with the military police structure. Tables of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) for MPDs throughout the Marine Corps remained relatively unchanged in the years prior to the 2001 terrorist attacks. Added to this problem was the increase in installation force protection measures that required even more personnel.[7] As a result, even fully staffed departments still lacked the manpower needed to manage daily operations efficiently according to the 2005 Tiger Team assessment.[8]

With the military focused on combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, MOS qualified MPs remain in high demand. Yet despite the authorized increase of over 700 MPs through fiscal

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[6] This information is based on the author's personal experience as a Platoon Commander, Provost Marshal's Office, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune from September 2003 through June 2006.

[7] This information is based on the author's personal experience as a Platoon Commander, Provost Marshal's Office, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune from September 2003 through June 2006.

[8] Johnson, MROC.

year 2011[9], the MP community would still be reliant on external augmentation to satisfy mission requirements of the garrison MPDs. By transitioning to a blended force of military policemen and GS police officers, MPDs will no longer have to rely on obtaining nearly half of their workforce through programs such as FAP or SAF. Permanently assigning personnel to each department will ensure that an adequate staff is on hand with the appropriate levels of training and experience.

Experienced Personnel

Military Police Departments differ from nearly any other Marine Corps unit in that duty personnel come from numerous occupational specialties to perform a mission where a defined MOS already exists. The duties of military policemen demand the highest standards of professionalism, discipline, and critical thinking. Military police perform their mission daily, without script, and under the constant scrutiny of the general public. Imagine having to assembling an infantry company of out of cooks, administrators, supply clerks, radio technicians, vehicle operators, aviation mechanics, and nearly every other MOS imaginable. Deploy them immediately for 6 months with all assets of an infantry battalion and a mission to conduct daily

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[9] Johnson, MROC.

foot patrols. If placed in this situation, Marines would quickly learn the skills needed for the mission and undoubtedly have a successful tour. Upon their return however, replace half of the unit with all new Marines from a similar mix of MOSs and again, immediately redeploy. Only then can one truly begin to understand how the turnover of personnel impacts the base MPDs on a regular basis.

Clearly one advantage of a blended force within the department is a wide range of experience and training levels that can bring new and creative approaches to the MP mission. But having such a large number of non-MOS qualified Marines on staff artificially limits the amount of law enforcement specific training and experience the department can have. To remedy this shortfall, individual bases conduct some form of training academy designed to introduce the basics of military police work such as manning gates, weapons qualification, and policies specific to that installation. While valuable and necessary training, it amounts to only a fraction of the training that MOS qualified Marines receive.[10] Only after an extensive period of on-the-job training, combined with proven ability and time remaining at the unit, does a Marine receive specialized law enforcement training.

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[10] Department of the Navy, *Military Police and Corrections Training and Readiness Manual (NAVMC 3500.10)*, 2007 (Washington, D.C.), Chap 6.

No longer are MPs little more than the base commander's interior guard force. Today's military policemen must be well trained in law enforcement techniques and fully engaged a broad range of police functions from security presence, to the management of a major disaster. While GS police officers operate under a different set of labor laws and conditions of employment than their Marine counterparts, their performance of duties are designed to meet and/or exceed the capabilities of our current force. Many come from a background of military or law enforcement experience, providing military police departments with the opportunity to hire and retain quality personnel. A review of the applications submitted to Marine Corps Base Hawaii revealed that the majority of applicants were either retired or transitioning military, retired or transitioning civilian police officers, or had previous military service.[11] This trend is a result of recruiting efforts implemented by HQMC and reinforced locally to specifically target this population based on what is already known about likely experiences and character.

Professionalism and Standards

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[11] Unless otherwise noted, this material is based on the author's personal experience as Services Officer, Military Police Department, Marine Corps Base Hawaii responsible for program development and implementation for Hawaii from July 2006 through June 2008.

As the premier fighting force, the Marine Corps maintains a reputation that is difficult to match or even emulate among civilian organizations. Unfortunately, the negative images of contract security guards at other military bases are often what one envisions when discussing the Marine Corps Civilian Law Enforcement (MCCLE) program. Those who have encountered these guards, usually describe them as the "stereotypical mall security guard," whose slovenly appearance calls into question his or her ability to protect the base. But the Marine Corps' requirements extend beyond the mere requirement of security. In order for the program to effectively support the MPDs, personnel hired must be fully integrated into the department's mission. HQMC made the decision to augment MPDs with GS police officers instead of GS security guards based on the specific duties that distinguish them. As defined by their GS series, GS-0085 security guards are tasked specifically to guard federally owned property and equipment. GS-0083 police officers however, are specifically tasked with, "the preservation of the peace; the prevention, detection, and investigation of crimes; the arrest or apprehension of violators; and the provision of assistance to citizens in emergency situations."[12]   Given these defined

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[12] Office of Personnel Management (OPM), *Grade Evaluation Guide for Police and Security Guard Positions in Series, GS-0083, GS-0085*, online ed. (Washington, DC: OPM, Apr 1988), URL:< http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gs008385.pdf>, accessed 13 Dec 2008.

missions, GS police officers are the only personnel who bring

the skill sets and flexibility necessary to fill the shortage of

MPs.

In order to strike a balance between the high standards

demanded by the Marine Corps and requirements that qualified

applicants would find acceptable, HQMC compared fitness and

other evaluation requirements imposed by DoD and police

departments across the United States, then developed a uniform

set of standards for MCCLE police officers.[13] These standards

included a series of requirements for Body Mass Index (BMI),

physical agility, and grooming. Applicants see these standards

within the Position Description and prior to being hired must

pass the Physical Agility Test (PAT) consisting of a BMI

measurement, 300 Meter run in less than 71.0 seconds, minimum of

25 crunches/one minute, minimum of 20 pushups/two minutes, 1.5

mile run in under 16:28 minutes, and 25 ft. dummy drag.

Additionally, they must complete a psychological evaluation as a

part of their initial application process.[14]

Once hired, applicants attend a mandatory nine week Police

Academy. Here they participate in a standardized curriculum

that includes customs and courtesies, physical conditioning, law

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[13] Johnson, MROC.

[14] Headquarters Marine Corps, Security Division, *Standards Physical Agility Test.* http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/pp&o/PS/psl/SESTP%20Policy/3.%20 Standards%20Physical%20Agility%20Test.doc.

and order, emergency response, and other required training.[15]

Unlike many civilian police departments however, MCCLE police officers must annually pass the BMI and PAT as a condition of employment. Like their Marine counterparts, personnel found to be outside of BMI, PAT, uniform, or grooming standards may be subjected to a performance review and possibly suspension or dismissal. These included differences ensure that the Marine Corps employs quality personnel through a system of accountability.

Conclusion

The MROC decision to transition to a blended military and civilian police force, while not without flaw, ensures that the military police departments across the Marine Corps maintain fully staffed, experienced, and professional organizations. Like many other occupations, the Military Police MOS has been in desperate need of a revalidation of personnel to meet the modern threat. The aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks further amplified this need as the nation looked closer at our ability to defend against attacks in the future. Through honest and complete assessments of its capabilities, the

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[15] Headquarters Marine Corps, Security Division, *Standards Physical Agility Test.* http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/pp&o/PS/psl/SESTP%20Policy/8.%20 Standards%20MCPA%20Course%20Master%20Schedule%209%20Week.pdf

military police community sought and found the innovative means

needed to adapt to the drastically changed operating

environment.

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